

Fine print tells if contribution aids Liberty

By Roger Boye

A timely question about Statue of Liberty keepsakes begins this week's column.

Q—I'd like to donate money to the Statue of Liberty repair project by buying some coins or medals. But I've seen advertisements for at least six different items, including "diamond belt buckles." Which product sales actually will help pay for statue repairs? G.J., Chicago

A—Check the fine print in those advertisements for words like "a portion of the proceeds will go to restoring the statue," or better yet, "this item is authorized by the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc."

You might consider buying the special commemorative coins issued by Uncle Sam [described in my Nov. 17 column] or medallions from the Liberty Commemorative Project [described in the Dec. 15 column]. From 15 to 40 percent of the gross revenue generated by sales of those collectibles will go to the foundation for statue repairs and related projects. [The foundation is the only statue fundraiser recognized by the National Park Service.]

Of course, several companies are issuing specialty items strictly for their own profit, despite what some clever advertisements might imply. Beware of generalities in ads such as, "minted for the 100th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty." That's no guarantee that any part of your money will go to The Lady.

Q—I have a \$1 bill, uncirculated, with eight identical digits in the serial number. Can you tell me if it has any value? M.C., Chicago

A—Your keepsake might retail for \$125 or so, according to information compiled by currency expert Chuck O'Donnell in "Standard Handbook of Modern United States Paper Money." However, the market is thin because relatively few people collect such bills; thus, you may have some trouble finding a buyer.

In your self-addressed, stamped envelope, I'm sending you some paper-money advertisements from a recent issue of *Coin World*; they may help you identify currency dealers if you decide to sell.

Incidentally, other desirable serial numbers include repeating digits [such as 35793579 or 75757575]; ascenders [23456789] or descenders [87654321]; low numbers [usually 00009999 or below]; even numbers [such as 45000000]; and "radars"—numbers that read the same backwards and forwards [85733758].